

# *Iowa Outdoors*

## **Iowa Department of Natural Resources**

### **www.iowadnr.gov**

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1. Anglers Confused About Eating Fish After Flooding
2. Open House for New Lake Darling Lodge Complex
3. AmeriCorps Helps New Peregrine Family Feel at Home [electronic photo available upon request]
4. Last Volunteer Opportunities of the Summer
5. DNR Director Continues Public Forum Schedule at Lake Wapello

## **ANGLERS CONFUSED ABOUT EATING FISH AFTER FLOODING**

The chance that bacteria in a lake or river can contaminate fish is as likely as the Pittsburgh Steelers winning the World Series. It simply cannot happen.

But the confusion is understandable given the number of mixed messages Iowa anglers receive about the contamination in Iowa rivers after the number of wastewater treatment plants were knocked off-line during the floods last summer, said John Olson, environmental specialist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Section.

“This issue comes up every so often and I can’t stress enough that bacteria in the water and the wholesomeness of fish are not related,” Olson said. “Assuming you clean and cook the fish properly, bacteria is a non issue.”

Anglers in parts of Iowa that experienced long periods of floodwaters taking wastewater treatment plants off-line have been asking if it is safe to eat fish caught from those rivers where the plants are releasing the sewage.

“It’s just a non issue. Bacteria in water does not accumulate in fish flesh. There is no reason for someone who catches some catfish at Palisades-Kepler to not take them home and eat them,” Olson said. “Based on results of historical fish contaminant monitoring in and downstream from Cedar Rapids, those fish are safe to eat.”

Iowa DNR plans to conduct additional fish contaminant monitoring downstream from Cedar Rapids in 2008 as part of the annual DNR/U.S. EPA fish contaminant monitoring program. Anglers should also be aware that fish in all types of waters can sometimes develop diseases and may become infested with parasites. Again, common sense says that fish showing signs of obvious health problems should not be eaten.

Paul Sleeper, fisheries biologist for the district that includes Cedar Rapids, said the constant stream of messages about bacteria levels and sewage has many people scared

of the water. What people need to realize is, there is always bacteria in the water regardless of the conditions, Sleeper said.

“Fish are safe to eat. Just use a little common sense. Wash your hands after handling fish regardless of the body of water. Always take a shower after swimming in a lake or river. We always make those recommendations,” Sleeper said.

Olson said Iowa consumption advisories are issued for toxic substances that tend to accumulate in fish flesh including metals, pesticides and PCBs. Mercury is the main cause for issuing consumption advisories in Iowa and for advisories nationwide.

“Iowa’s current advisories are not a ban on consumption but are recommendations that a person should consume no more than one meal per week of that fish species,” he said. “There are no fish consumption advisories for bacteria in Iowa or in other states.” A list of the current fish consumption advisories in Iowa can be found at the Iowa DNR’s web site at <http://www.iowadnr.com/fish/news/consump.html>.

**MEDIA CONTACT: John Olson, environmental specialist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Section, 515-281-8905.**

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## **OPEN HOUSE FOR NEW LAKE DARLING LODGE COMPLEX**

BRIGHTON, Iowa - The new Lake Darling State Park lodge complex will be showcased during a grand opening at 10 a.m., Aug. 27. The \$1 million complex includes the lodge, a playground, a shelter, restrooms, an outside beach shower and an ADA approved sidewalk coning everything from the lodge to the boathouse.

“What excites me about the lodge complex is that these facilities are things we would not have gotten without the Friends of Lake Darling’s leadership and drive and the generosity of the local communities,” said Jeff Hildebrand, park ranger at Lake Darling State Park. “I also like to see the ownership that the local citizens take of Lake Darling and the complex as a result of this project.”

The lodge holds 200 people inside and an additional 50 in the outside shelter. Hildebrand said it is an excellent place to hold weddings, receptions, family reunions, company picnics, business meetings, graduation parties, class trips and holiday celebrations. It has restrooms, a main room with a fireplace and a kitchen with a stove and oven, microwave, two refrigerators and a storage room for the tables and chairs. The main room has a sound system with a microphone and speakers.

The beach restrooms have extra large rooms to change into swimwear. The shelter near the beach will hold 50 people and has electrical outlets and an upright grill.

“We are holding this open house to thank everyone who donated time, skill or money to make this dream a reality and to celebrate the joint participation of individuals, private business, city, county, state governments, and the DNR in accomplishing this goal,” said Merrill Lucas, park manager for Lake Darling.

The grand opening festivities will take place in the lodge, located near the beach. There have been more than 6,000 volunteer hours donated on this project so far, and more than \$1 million raised. The fundraising began at the end of April 2006, with a legislative appropriation of \$250,000.

The grand opening is co-hosted by the Iowa DNR and the Friends of Lake Darling.

**For more information, contact Bud Pitt, Friends of Lake Darling president (319) 694-5414; Fay Vittetoe, Friends of Lake Darling vice-president (319) 694-2815; Jeff Hildebrand, park ranger (319) 694-2323 or Merrill Lucas, park manager (319) 694-2323**

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[Electronic photo available upon request]

## **AMERICORPS HELPS NEW PEREGRINE FAMILY FEEL AT HOME**

DES MOINES - DNR Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members gathered to keep a watchful eye on the newest feathered addition to Des Moines; a family of peregrine falcons nestled atop the state Capitol.

The brood joins a more established pair of nesting falcons, which has made its home on the American Republic Insurance building for the past 15 years.

The female of the new couple originates from Minnesota, according to her leg tracking band. She has frequented the Capitol in recent summers, and was first spotted there by construction crews three years ago. Not much is known about the origins of her new mate, however, because he has not been banded.

DNR AmeriCorps member, Ann Cannon, works for the DNR Wildlife Diversity Program out of Boone. She has been monitoring the new falcon couple since March, when the female chose her suitor.

“When we saw a male hanging around her, we began plans to put a nesting tray up for her,” said Cannon. “There was some paperwork to fill out, because you can only do certain things to a historic building like the Capitol, but they were cooperative and it worked out.”

Pat Schlarbaum, a DNR Wildlife Diversity Program technician and Cannon’s supervisor, built a tray for the falcons that simulates the birds’ natural nesting territory: sheer cliffs with gravel to drain water away from the eggs, and a ledge to keep them from rolling away. Neumann Brothers Construction Company workers placed the tray on a covered ledge on the east side of the Capitol.

“[The female peregrine] tried nesting in other areas of the building at first. That’s when I discovered an egg of hers that rolled off the roof and splattered onto the ground,” said Cannon. “After that she must have decided our nest tray was a good spot.”

With the help of the provided nesting habitat, the falcons' second attempt at fledging young was successful, making them the 13<sup>th</sup> nesting pair of peregrines in the state. In early June, two chicks hatched from the nesting tray, one of each sex.

"The only thing better than a pair of nesting falcons is two pairs," said Schlarbaum. "As standard-bearers of our Endangered Species Act, peregrine falcons were lost as a nesting species from the Missouri River to the East coast in the 1950s. This is really a great time to celebrate the recovery of these birds."

Cannon and Schlarbaum have been monitoring the chicks since they hatched. After about 40 days, they observed the fledglings making their first attempts at flight. Because of the high risk of mortality at this time, the wildlife team called on other AmeriCorps members in the area to help "bird sit." Members Shelly Codner, Kate Lydon and Brenda Vargas took shifts monitoring the chicks.

"When they're learning to fly, it's important to keep track of them in case they get into trouble," said Brenda Vargas, who works at the DNR central office. "The traffic of Grand Avenue is their biggest threat, and they could have trouble getting back up to the roof, too."

On July 11, a peregrine event was held to celebrate and welcome the new family. Peregrine enthusiasts and the general public gathered at the capitol building to view the raptors and their young. Though the falcons were not active during that time, one perched on a ledge throughout the event and guests were able to view him through telescopes set up by AmeriCorps members.

During a presentation at the event, Kay Neuman, executive director of the non-profit group, Saving Our Avian Resources (S.O.A.R.), provided a chance for the group to experience a peregrine up-close by bringing along a captive-bred falcon.

Schlarbaum presented attendees with falcon facts and background on falcon conservation work around the state. John Nash, Capitol restoration project manager with the Department of Administrative Services, was recognized for the critical partnership DAS has established with DNR in the stewardship of falcons at the Capitol. Also, Marshal Linn III, CEO of Neumann Brothers Construction, was thanked for all their work with the falcon nesting attempt. DNR AmeriCorps members and the Des Moines Animal Control were also recognized.

At the event, the peregrine chicks received names. The female, "Jody," was named after a Neumann Brothers Construction employee. Also, as a memorial of Curt Small's deceased grandson, the young male falcon was named Cody. Small works as co-CEO for Neumann Brothers.

"I really wanted to do this for them, for all the help they've been with the falcons," said Schlarbaum.

Since falcon recovery efforts were ramped up in 1989, 168 falcons were released around the state. More than 150 young have fledged from falcon nests since 1993. Jody and Cody are the first to be named in Iowa.

Cannon and Schlarbaum will continue to monitor the falcons until their migration in the fall.

For more information on peregrine falcons in Iowa, visit <http://www.iowadnr.gov/wildlife/files/pfalcon.html>

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## LAST VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES OF THE SUMMER

DES MOINES — As summer winds down and fall appears on the horizon, Keepers of the Land, the volunteer program with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), offers many statewide volunteer events and opportunities to help Iowans enjoy the last of the summer outdoors.

- **Water Quality Monitoring Volunteer Training:** Officials with the IOWATER water quality monitoring program are offering training opportunities for interested volunteers. Training sessions will be offered August 15 in Howard County (Cresco) and September 5 in Jefferson County (Fairfield). Upon completion of the workshop, volunteers will be certified Level 1 IOWATER Citizen Monitors. For more information, contact Brian Soenen at 515-205-8587.
- **Butterfly Garden Opportunity:** Officials with Bellevue State Park are seeking volunteers to plant and care for individual plot in the park's butterfly garden. This is a great opportunity for families and individuals of all ages. Twenty-five plots are available for adoption. Plants, seeds, and tools are provided. This opportunity is available immediately. For more information, contact Ron Jones or Shannon Petersen at 563-872-4019.
- **Park Enhancement Opportunity:** Officials at Green Valley State Park are seeking volunteers to assist with various park enhancement projects including removing brush, repairing and painting picnic tables, cleaning fire rings, raking sand around playground equipment, removing litter, and staining piers. This opportunity is available immediately. For more information, contact Greg Haley at 641-782-5131.
- **Tree Care Opportunity:** Officials at Wildcat Den State Park are seeking volunteers to assist with general tree care activities including trimming and cutting trees in public use areas and road sides. This opportunity is available immediately. For more information, contact Jim Ohl, at 563-263-4337.
- **Sign Construction Opportunity:** Officials at Big Creek State Park are seeking volunteers to assist with constructing wood signs and sign posts for reservation boxes and bike trail mileage signs. Lumber will be provided. This opportunity is available immediately. For more information, contact Kim Olofson at 515-984-6473.

A full listing of volunteer opportunities and events is available at [www.keepersoftheland.org](http://www.keepersoftheland.org)

For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or [Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov)

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## **DNR DIRECTOR CONTINUES PUBLIC FORUM SCHEDULE AT LAKE WAPELLO**

DRAKESVILLE, Iowa – Richard Leopold, director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, is holding public forums each week around Iowa through early September, with the next session at Lake Wapello State Park on Thursday, Aug. 21.

“I’m looking forward to sharing some of the important initiatives underway within the department, but more importantly, I really want to hear from Iowa’s citizens. One thing I am particularly proud of is the rapport that the DNR has with the public. This is a relationship we value highly within the DNR,” said Leopold.

The public forum begins at 6 p.m. with Director Leopold outlining the department’s top 10 priorities, work being done to develop environmental indicators for the state, providing an update on sustainable funding for natural resources and discussion of local issues. Another hour-and-a-half will be devoted to answering questions from the public.

The other public forums scheduled are as follows:

Wednesday, August 27  
Backbone State Park beach Lodge  
Dundee

Thursday, September 4  
Viking Lake State Park  
Stanton

**For more information, contact Tammie Krausman at 515-402-8763.**

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